

# Readers Take the Floor . . .

## All About Zionism and the Emotions

To the Editor:

Draper's recent articles on the Jews require, I believe, a reply from the internationalist viewpoint:

What strikes one first about Draper's writings on this question is his intense emotionalism, which contrasts so strikingly with his logic on other matters. So, in his 1951 resolution, the word "Zionist" almost never occurs alone; practically always it is preceded by the adjective "criminal." This is hardly accidental: The only people that have ever been accused of genocide in LABOR ACTION have been the Jews. The state of Israel is still referred to as a "ghetto." Draper has learned that some Zionists talked of Jewish tribes, and this is sufficient for him: Jewish nationalism, he declares, is nothing but tribalism. He repeats the deliberate lies of a certain Zukerman that Zionism is comparable to Nazism. (The criminality of the Nazis consisted in their assertion of racial superiority, with its justification of the enslavement and murder of all non-Germans. Does Draper claim that this is the nature of Zionism? I do not dare to mention the nation from which Nazism sprang, lest I be termed a racist in reverse; however, in spite of the fact that Draper associates it almost exclusively with the Jews, Nazism was definitely not a movement of Jewish nationalism.)

This glaring prejudice springs from one source: assimilationism. For this letter, the assimilationist must be distinguished from an assimilated person, who has simply drifted away from his old nationality. The assimilationist, however, is so insecure in his would-be one hundred per cent Americans, that he strives to obliterate all Jewish communities everywhere, lest some unkind person identify him with some remaining Jewish group.

Socialists have always opposed this reactionary assimilationism as, e.g., in Alsace, Tyrol, the Ukraine, etc. In *The Dark Side of the Moon*, a Polish girl who describes her tortures in a Russian concentration camp tells us that at no time did she suffer such agony as when she was assured that there was no such thing as a Polish nationality. The brutality of this assimilationism has always been apparent. Only where the Jewish nation is concerned do some individuals have the temerity not only to advocate that which we reject for the rest of mankind, but even try to palm off their chauvinism as having some connection with socialism.

Since assimilationists deny that Jews are a nation, the following must be said:

In Eastern Europe, whole villages and towns were Jewish in culture: the language, religion, press, politics, all were Jewish. There is not a single attribute of nationality which these Jews lacked (including territory, which was not, however, contiguous).

The fact that there were also Jews in other parts of the world where they were not a nationality (like colonies of Germans outside of Germany) does not negate the fact of the existence of the nation.

This nation is now struggling for survival. It is the duty of socialists to help it, not to make comparisons with Nazism, which both morally and objectively are light years away from the truth.

L SHIELDS

Since Comrade Shields has the advantage of having such a firm grip on his own emotions, he should utilize this distinction by taking up the criticisms which we have made of the Zionist ideology and Zionist practice in Israel. This criticism has been a very detailed and documented one, most particularly in last year's "The Triple Crisis of Zionism" (Sept. 17-24). The too-frequent Zionist habit of substituting slander for argumentation is really a waste of time in these pages.

In the 1951 resolution of the ISL on Zionism and the Jewish Question, the word Zionism or Zionist occurs 34 times. In exactly one sentence, the word "criminal" also occurs, with double justification since it is the policy of Zionism toward the Arab people under British imperialism that is referred to. With his wonderful lack of emotion, Shields reads "criminal" into the resolution "practically always."

"The only people that have ever been accused of genocide in LA have been the Jews," writes Shields. This is unbelievable slander. LABOR ACTION has never accused any Jews, let alone "the" Jews, of genocide. In the resolution to which Shields refers, genocide or its idea is referred to three times: once with respect to the potentialities of anti-Semitic trends under capitalism, once with respect to the policy of Nazism, and finally with respect to the policy of Stalinism.—What, we wonder, do pro-Zionists have to gain by such transparent smears?

Shields cannot distinguish "Jewish nationalism" from the chauvinist form with which the Zionist ideology fills this concept. The ISL resolution carefully and explicitly distinguishes what are to us the legitimate claims of Jewish and Israeli nationalism from Zionism. Shields is free to argue this distinction as soon as he recognizes its existence.

The "some Zionists" who talked of "Jewish tribes" were the leaders of Israel at the late World Zionist Congress. My reference to this last year apparently still rankles in Shields' mind. He should discuss it some day.

LABOR ACTION has never identified Zionism with Nazi fascism. We have given evidence to show that Zionism and anti-Semitism have common premises which make them "bisymmetric phenomena," as we did again only last week. Typically, Shields does not take this up. (The same goes

for the remarks about William Zukerman of the *Jewish Newsletter*, whom Shields unemotionally and slanderously accuses of "deliberate lies" because of his anti-Zionist viewpoint.)

The ISL resolution has a special section on "assimilationism." One of its points is that socialists do not take a position for or against it in general, but that it is a choice to be made by individual Jews in a free society. Shields equates "assimilationism" with striving "to obliterate all Jewish communities everywhere," which is typical of the Zionist apologist who equates assimilationism with anti-Semitism, the devil, or any other evil which happens to be on the tip of his pen.

It is hard to believe that Shields actually wrote that "socialists have always opposed this reactionary assimilationism." There have been various views in the socialist movement on this question, and a form of assimilationism, to one degree or another, has been perhaps the most frequent trend—from Marx to Kautsky to Lenin and points left and right.

The ISL supported the defense of Israel against the Arab assault upon its right to self-determination in favor of nationhood. We have also argued that the Zionist policies of the Israeli leadership are not only chauvinist but of harm to the people of Israel. We do not know what Shields is writing about in this connection.

Hal DRAPER.

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